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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 002565

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KU KDMR
SUBJECT:  KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION, JUNE 8-11: NORMALIZATION
WITH ISRAEL; ROAD MAP PEACE PLAN; AMERICAN PRESENCE IN
REGION


¶1.    SUMMARY: Comments early in the week by the State
Minister for Foreign Affairs that Kuwait supports
normalization of relations with Israel "within the framework
of a joint Arab position" unleashed a torrent of
denunciations from conservative and Islamist groups. Liberal
commentators see government back-tracking on the issue in a
statement by the Minister of Information (that "Kuwait would
be the last state to normalize relations" with Israel) and
characterize it as caving in to "Kuwait's terrorists and
backward citizens."

The funeral of the first identified Kuwaiti POW returned
from Iraq was front-page news on June 11. Editor-in-chief
Mohammed Al-Jassim, charged earlier in the week with
"contesting the authority of the Amir," continues his public
calls for government reform. END SUMMARY.

¶2.    News Stories: The lead story in all newspapers on June
11 was the burial in Kuwait of the remains of the first
positively identified Kuwaiti POW, Saad Al-Onaizi. The
funeral was attended by Minister of Interior, Sheikh
Mohammed Al-Khaled.

On June 8, Al-Qabas reports that State Minister for Foreign
Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah said Kuwait supports
normalization with Israel within the framework of Saudi
Crown Prince Abdullah's initiative, prompting the
conservative Islamist Salafi Movement to reject any attempt
at normalization with "the Zionist entity" under any
circumstances. Al-Qabas also reports that Information
Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd stated that Kuwait would be
last country to normalize relations with the Hebrew State.

Al-Seyassa reports that families of 149 POWs plan a peaceful
demonstration in front of the National Committee for POWs
and Missing to object to being notified over the phone that
their children were killed in Iraq based a "non-authentic
document."

Following his release on bail, editor-in-chief of Arabic
daily Al-Watan, Mohammed Al-Jassim, participated in an
electoral seminar on June 10, and called for a reevaluation
of the country's political process. Al-Watan reports that
"concerned Kuwaiti authorities" requested, "not one, but two
recordings from two individual tape recorders" for Al-
Jassim's statements during the seminar.

Al-Qabas reports a statement from the Director General of
Kuwait Customs that Kuwait had confiscated six Iraqi
historical artifacts that were in the possession of an
unnamed American citizen.

Editorials:

¶3.   "What Will We Gain From Normalization?"
Ali Al-Ajmi wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (6/10):
"Arabs and Muslims consider Israel a dagger that has split
the Arab people. We only hope that Kuwait will not rush into
this step [of normalizing relations with Israel], which we
believe has not been properly studied and justified, that is
unless it was decided under external pressure. to comply
with the American polices in the region."

¶4.   "Normalization Is On The Way"
Liberal Political Science professor, Dr. Ahmad Al-Baghdadi
wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (6/11):  "Normalization is
inevitable. Kuwait will have to choose between Arab
extremist ideologies and American forces that will not
forgive Kuwait if it resists normalization. It is not
farfetched to think that [Kuwaiti] religious groups may
demand from the government public funds or special projects
in return for their support for normalization. The Arab
world supports normalization with Israel, and each Arab
government will act according to its interests. The Arab

Street may reject normalization, but it is powerless."

¶5. "When The Government Is Frightened"
Liberal Abdul-Latif Al-Duaij wrote in independent Al-Qabas (6/09): "Kuwait's Minister of Information, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahd, described the Israeli government as a `Sharonian terrorist' state. This description was. a desperate attempt to absorb the anger caused by the statements made by Kuwait's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah, welcoming normalization with Israel. Kuwait's terrorists and backward citizens objected [to Sheikh Dr. Mohammad's statement] and the agents of the Taliban and Bin Laden's cells were angered, thus the Minister of Information issued assurances that there would be no normalization. It seems our government has formed an alliance with backward religious forces as it vindicates-- through its own Minister of Information-- Hamas, [Islamic] Jihad and other terrorist groups [in their actions] against Abbas's government and the ideology of peace."

¶6. "The Restrictions of the New Occupier"
Conservative Dr. Sami Khalifa wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (6/9): "The American Administration has entered the Middle East region by forcing Arab regimes to recognize the existence of the Zionist entity under the pretext of proposing what is called the `Road Map'. [T]he US is insisting on remaining in Iraq as an occupying force in order to rearrange the regional situation to serve its economic and political avidity, and to maintain its military bases to eventually control Arab and Muslim resources."

¶7. "Reformation of the Arab Mentality"
Nasser Al-Otaibi wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (6/9): "With the fall of the Iraqi regime and the Baath party, a new era has begun. We must reevaluate our Arab mentality in an effort to built defenses against any tyrants or oppressive rulers. We must also. abide by humanitarian and international principles in addition to denouncing all terrorist acts and all oppressive ideologies. This will help the Arab nation present itself as a responsible nation. capable of undertaking a positive role in society."


JONES